

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

|                            |   |                                  |
|----------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Jonathan Lee Riches,       | ) |                                  |
|                            | ) |                                  |
| Plaintiff,                 | ) | <b>Report and Recommendation</b> |
|                            | ) |                                  |
| vs.                        | ) |                                  |
|                            | ) |                                  |
| John Manuel Melendrez;     | ) | C/A No. 6:08-631-MBS-WMC         |
|                            | ) |                                  |
| Christopher Eric McNeil;   | ) | C/A No. 6:08-632 -MBS-WMC        |
|                            | ) |                                  |
| Stephen James Stapleton;   | ) | C/A No. 6:08-633-MBS-WMC         |
|                            | ) |                                  |
| Pavel Ivanovich Lazarenko; | ) | C/A No. 6:08-634-MBS-WMC         |
|                            | ) |                                  |
| Nicholas Edward Pittarelli | ) | C/A No. 6:08-635-MBS-WMC         |
| and John A. Rogers, Jr.;   | ) |                                  |
|                            | ) |                                  |
| Eddie Milton Garey, Jr.;   | ) | C/A No. 6:08-636-MBS-WMC         |
|                            | ) |                                  |
| Defendants.                | ) |                                  |
|                            | ) |                                  |

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The Plaintiff, Jonathan Lee Riches (Plaintiff), is a federal inmate at FCI-Williamsburg proceeding *pro se*.<sup>1</sup> Plaintiff filed the six (6) civil actions listed above as “class action” suits against a variety of defendants. The complaints, which are construed as civil rights actions pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, request injunctive relief.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Since December, 2007, Plaintiff has filed one hundred and thirty-one (131) cases, including the present action, with this Court.

<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. §636(b)(1)(B), and Local Rule 73.02(B)(2)(d), D.S.C., the undersigned is authorized to review such complaints for relief and submit findings and recommendations to the District Court.

### Pro Se Review

A review has been made of the *pro se* pleadings pursuant to the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PRLA).<sup>3</sup> This review has also been conducted in light of the following precedents: *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 324-325 (1989); *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519 (1972); *Nasim v. Warden, Md. House of Corr.*, 64 F.3d 951 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1995) (*en banc*) (1996); *Todd v. Baskerville*, 712 F.2d 70 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1983).

This Court is required to liberally construe *pro se* documents, *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97 (1976), holding them to a less stringent standard than those drafted by attorneys, *Hughes v. Rowe*, 449 U.S. 9 (1980) (*per curiam*). Even under this less stringent standard, however, the *pro se* complaints are subject to summary dismissal. The mandated liberal construction afforded to *pro se* pleadings means that if the court can reasonably read the pleadings to state a valid claim on which the plaintiff could prevail, it should do so, but a district court may not rewrite a complaint to include claims that were never presented, *Barnett v. Hargett*, 174 F.3d 1128, 1133 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1999), or construct the plaintiff's legal arguments for him, *Small v. Endicott*, 998 F.2d 411, 417-18 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1993), or "conjure up questions never squarely presented" to the court, *Beaudett v. City of Hampton*, 775 F.2d 1274, 1278 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1985) (1986). The requirement of liberal construction does not mean that the court

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<sup>3</sup> It is noted that Plaintiff failed to provide the financial documents necessary to render these cases in proper form. Typically, an order directing the prisoner to submit an Application to Proceed Without Prepayment of Fees and Costs (Form AO-240) and a Financial Certificate would be issued for each case. See Procedures In Civil Actions Filed By Prisoner *Pro Se* Litigants, Misc. No. 3:07-mc-5014-JFA. However, as Plaintiff is barred by the "three strikes" rule in the above actions from proceeding *in forma pauperis*, an order directing Plaintiff to submit an application to proceed without prepayment of the fees would be futile.

can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts which set forth a claim cognizable in a federal district court. *Weller v. Dep't of Soc. Serv.*, 901 F.2d 387 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1990).

### **Discussion**

The Plaintiff's claims in the above listed cases are subject to summary dismissal under the "three strikes" rule of the Prison Litigation Reform Act. This rule, codified at U.S.C. § 1915(g), provides:

In no event shall a prisoner bring a civil action or appeal a judgment in a civil action or proceeding under this section if the prisoner has, on 3 or more prior occasions, while incarcerated or detained in any facility, brought an action or appeal in a court of the United States that was dismissed on the grounds that it is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, unless the prisoner is under imminent danger of serious physical injury.

Congress enacted the three-strikes rule to bar prisoners, such as the Plaintiff, who have filed prior frivolous litigation in a federal court, from pursuing certain types of federal civil rights litigation. See *Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities v. Nixon*, 366 F. Supp. 51, 55 & n. 6 (D.D.C. 1973) ("When it comes to the jurisdiction of the federal courts, truly, to paraphrase the scripture, the Congress giveth and the Congress taketh away."). See *Also Bay View, Inc. v. AHTNA, Inc.*, 105 F.3d 1281, 1283, (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1997); *NGS American, Inc. v. Barnes*, 998 F.2d 296, 298 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1993).

This Court may take judicial notice that the Plaintiff has previously filed at least three (3) cases dismissed and deemed a strike under § 1915(g) by this Court.<sup>4</sup> See *Aloe Creme*

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<sup>4</sup> Plaintiff has filed more than three (3) prior frivolous cases in this Court since 2006, and such previous frivolous filings have been duly noted in reports and recommendations and/or orders of this Court in the following cases: Civil Action Nos. 4:06-442-MBS-WMC, 4:07-4094-MBS-WMC, 4:07-4095-MBS-WMC, 4:07-4097-MBS-WMC, 4:07-4098-MBS-WMC, and 6:07-4135-MBS-WMC.

*Laboratories, Inc. v. Francine Co.*, 425 F.2d 1295, 1296 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1970) (the court may take judicial notice of its own records). *See also Mann v. Peoples First Nat. Bank & Trust Co.*, 209 F.2d 570, 572 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1954) (approving trial court's taking judicial notice of proceedings had before it in prior suit with same parties). In light of the Plaintiff's prior "strikes," he cannot proceed with the instant complaints unless (1) his claim satisfies the exception for "imminent" physical harm provided by the three-strikes rule, or (2) he pays the full filing fee. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g). *See also Banos v O'Guin*, 144 F.3d 883 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1998).

In order to invoke the "imminent danger" exception of § 1915(g), an "inmate must make 'specific fact allegations of ongoing serious injury, or of a pattern of misconduct evidencing the likelihood of imminent serious physical injury.'" *Johnson v. Warner*, No. 05-7048, slip op. at 272, 200 Fed. App'x 270, 272 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2006)(quoting *Martin v. Shelton*, 319 F.3d 1048, 1050 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2003)). In addition, fact allegations that are remote, speculative, or hypothetical do not rise to the level of "imminent danger." *See Welch v. Selsky*, 2008 WL 238553, at \*5 (N.D. New York, Jan. 28, 2008)("The imminent danger an inmate faces, moreover, must be real, and not merely speculative or hypothetical.")

Obviously aware of the potential three-strikes bar to his claims, Plaintiff includes the term "imminent danger" in four (4) of the above captioned complaints. In all of the complaints, Plaintiff claims he has received threats from the Defendants, many of whom are allegedly "violent". However, the instant complaints contain no allegations of any type of "ongoing serious injury" suffered by the Plaintiff, and a search of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' (BOP) website revealed that none of the Defendants are currently incarcerated at FCI-Williamsburg.<sup>5</sup> As the Defendants have no immediate access to the Plaintiff, his claims

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<sup>5</sup> The BOP website lists Defendant Christopher Eric McNeil as an inmate at the United States Penitentiary (USP) Pollock in Louisiana; Defendant Eddie Milton Garey, Jr., is listed as an inmate at USP Big Sandy in Inez, Kentucky; and several John A. Rogers' are listed, however, none are incarcerated at FCI-Williamsburg.

regarding the receipt of threats are too speculative to evidence a “likelihood of imminent serious physical injury”. Thus, Plaintiff has failed to invoke the “imminent danger” exception to § 1915(g), and is barred by the “three-strikes” rule from proceeding with the above referenced cases, unless the filing fees are paid.

**Plaintiff is hereby given a period of ten (10) days, from the date of service of this Report and Recommendation, to pay the three hundred fifty (\$350.00) dollar filing fee for each of the above cases. The time calculation of this ten-day period excludes weekends and holidays and provides for an additional three (3) days for payment of the filing fees by mail.**

#### **Recommendation**

Should Plaintiff fail to pay the filing fees as directed above, it is recommended that the complaints be dismissed under the “three strikes” rule of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g). See *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 324-325 (1989); *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519 (1972); *Brown v. Briscoe*, 998 F.2d 201, 202-04 & n.\* (4<sup>th</sup> Cir.1993); *Todd v. Baskerville*, 712 F.2d 70 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1983). The Plaintiff's attention is directed to the important notice on the next page.

March 12, 2008  
Greenville, South Carolina

s/William M. Catoe  
United States Magistrate Judge

**Notice of Right to File Objections to Report and Recommendation**

The parties are advised that they may file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation with the District Court Judge. Objections must specifically identify the portions of the Report and Recommendation to which objections are made and the basis for such objections. In the absence of a timely filed objection, a district court need not conduct a de novo review, but instead must “only satisfy itself that there is no clear error on the face of the record in order to accept the recommendation.” *Diamond v. Colonial Life & Acc. Ins. Co.*, 416 F.3d 310 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2005).

Specific written objections must be filed within ten (10) days of the date of service of this Report and Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b). The time calculation of this ten-day period excludes weekends and holidays and provides for an additional three (3) days for filing by mail. Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a) & (e). Filing by mail pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 5 may be accomplished by mailing objections to:

Larry W. Propes, Clerk  
United States District Court  
P. O. Box 10768  
Greenville, South Carolina 29603

**Failure to timely file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation will result in waiver of the right to appeal from a judgment of the District Court based upon such Recommendation.** 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); *Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140 (1985); *United States v. Schronce*, 727 F.2d 91 (4th Cir. 1984); *Wright v. Collins*, 766 F.2d 841 (4th Cir. 1985).